

Early childhood education program leaders develop and use an evidence-based, program-level curriculum framework to outline the program's priorities and describe what is expected of teachers as they develop classroom-level curriculum. All early learning programs – including public, private and independent schools, community based programs and family child care providers – should develop and use quality curriculum in all classrooms. High-quality programs provide consistent, quality services to all children, including infants, toddlers, preschoolers and children with special needs.

A program curriculum framework supports the four core components of quality classroom curriculum:

1. **Context** – Materials, Learning Environments, Routines & Schedules
2. **Content** – What Children Know, Understand and Are Able To Do
3. **Teaching and Facilitating** – Teacher's Role, Relationships & Intentional Teaching
4. **Process** – How Children Learn

As an introduction to the curriculum framework, educational leaders commonly include a written philosophy statement. A philosophy statement describes the program's educational beliefs and practices, including how program practices align with quality standards. The statement also highlights the program's unique characteristics. Together, the philosophy statement and the curriculum framework serve as important resources for teachers as they communicate with families and the community and as they design their classroom level curriculum. Program-level guidance helps classroom teachers deliver consistent educational services.

Developing a Program Curriculum Framework

Educational leaders submitting a program curriculum framework to BrightStars or the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) are advised to refer to Standard 6 (Curriculum) of the 2013 RIDE Comprehensive Early Childhood Education (CECE) Program Standards.¹ Standards 6.1 – 6.7 specifically address curriculum at the program level.

Standard 6.1 provides an organizing structure for a curriculum framework. Administrators, Education Coordinators and Family Childcare Providers developing a framework are advised to refer to coursework completed as part of RIELDS training (*Developing a Standards Based Curriculum*).²

¹ www.ride.ri.gov/InstructionAssessment/EarlyChildhoodEducation/Programs.aspx

² RIELS Level III training included comparable curriculum framework coursework.

RIELDS assignments provide clear direction for how to create a program curriculum framework that supports classroom curriculum aligned to the RIELDS.

Developing a Curriculum Framework That Includes Infants and Toddlers

RIDE CECE Standards were developed for preschool programs; however, Standards 6.1 – 6.7 may also serve as the foundation for a comprehensive program curriculum framework that includes infants and toddlers. Recommendations for how to expand the CECE Standards to include expectations for teachers responsible for the care and education of infants and toddlers are included in Appendix A. Programs are also advised to reference *Zero to Three's Caring for Infants and Toddlers in Groups: Developmentally Appropriate Practice* and RIELDS/RIELS coursework for further guidance.

Supporting Classroom-Level Curriculum

Appendix B includes RIDE CECE Classroom Level Standards 6.8 – 6.23. A curriculum framework developed using program-level Standards 6.1 – 6.7 should clearly support the classroom-level curriculum described in Standards 6.8 – 6.23.³ However, it is not necessary for a framework narrative to explicitly address individual classroom-level Standards. By comprehensively addressing each component of curriculum – context, content, teaching and facilitating and process – a program curriculum framework provides overarching guidance for teachers as they individualize high-quality instructional strategies, planned learning environments, multilevel learning opportunities, nurturing relationships and approaches to children's learning and development in all RIELDS domains.

BrightStars Application Instructions

Programs completing a 5 Star BrightStars application are required to submit a program curriculum framework aligned to the Rhode Island Early Learning and Development Standards (RIELDS).⁴ Programs that enroll infants, toddlers and preschoolers should submit a single curriculum framework that comprehensively includes all children served. The curriculum framework should be included as part of the program's application. In addition, an electronic copy should be available upon request. Frameworks will be forwarded by BrightStars to the RI Department of Education and will be reviewed within 30 days of delivery.

³ Not all classroom-level standards will apply to infants and toddlers.

⁴ BrightStars Family Childcare Quality Framework Standard 5; BrightStars Child Care Centers and Preschools Framework Standard 7

Curriculum Frameworks are reviewed by RIDE using a nine-component rubric. Components are derived from:

- Standards: 2013 CECE Program Standards for Approval, Program-level Standards 6.1 – 6.7
- Criteria: RIELDS/RIELS training content pertaining to philosophy statements and infants/toddler curriculum⁵

Rubric components are comprised of elements. The component requirements are **MET** if all elements are adequately addressed. The component requirements are **PARTIALLY MET** if at least half the elements are adequately or partially addressed. The component requirements are **NOT MET** if less than half the elements are adequately or partially addressed. The rubric contains eight core components all frameworks must address. The ninth component addresses infant/toddler curriculum and applies only to programs serving infants & toddlers. It is scored separately.

Approved: Frameworks that have **MET** all applicable standards and criteria are approved.

Not Approved – Option to Clarify: If 6 or more core components are scored MET or PARTIALLY MET (>75%) the framework is designated NOT APPROVED-OPTION TO CLARIFY. Programs given the opportunity to clarify will have **15 days** to submit a new, complete, electronic revision to RIDE (contact above). The clarified framework should address all elements scored PARTIALLY MET or NOT MET. The revised framework should clearly indicate the clarifications that were made by highlighting changes within the document. Clarified frameworks will be reviewed within 15 days of receipt by RIDE using the same rubric. Frameworks that adequately address all rubric elements upon second review will be approved. Frameworks that do not will not be approved, and opportunities for further clarification will not be provided as part of the same application.

Not Approved: If fewer than 6 of the 8 core components are scored **MET** or **PARTIALLY MET** (<75%) the framework is not approved. Revised frameworks may be submitted at a later date as part of a request for a Star Rating increase or as part of a renewal application.

EXCEPTIONS: If component two (CECE standard 6.1) is scored **NOT MET** the framework will not be approved even if all other standards and criteria are met or partially met. In addition, frameworks submitted by programs that serve infants and toddlers will not be approved if component nine is scored **NOT MET** even if all other standards and criteria are met or partially met.

For assistance clarifying or revising frameworks please see the list of resources at the end of this document.

⁵ Summary can be found in the document “Comprehensive Program Curriculum Framework Overview,” found at www.center-elc.org;

**RIDE Comprehensive Early Childhood Education Programs Standards for Approval of
Preschool and Kindergarten Programs****Standards 6.1 – 6.7 / Program-Level Curriculum – The Curriculum Framework**
Including recommended enhancements for programs serving infants and toddlers

6.1 The program shall have a **written curriculum framework** aligned to the Rhode Island Early Learning and Development Standards and/or Common Core State Standards that recognizes the individual needs for all children. This framework is a description of how the program will implement core components of a quality curriculum: context, content, teaching and facilitating and process.

In addition, programs that serve infants and toddlers should address expectations for age-appropriate classroom practices where appropriate. For example, programs should address:

- *the importance of primary caregiving and continuity of care*
- *family partnerships that stress the importance of sensitive, trusting, and respectful, sharing-the-caring relationships with parents*

6.2 The curriculum framework shall describe how the **materials and equipment** are intentionally chosen to support children's learning, interests, and skills levels while reflecting the lives of the children and families; reflecting the diversity found in society, including gender, age, language and abilities; encouraging exploration, experimentation, and discovery; and are organized to support independent use; rotated to reflect changing curriculum and accommodate new interests and skill levels; rich in variety; and accommodate children's developmental delays and disabilities.

6.3 The curriculum framework shall guide teachers in the development of a developmentally appropriate **daily schedule** that is predictable, yet flexible and responsive to the needs of the children.

In addition, programs serving infants and toddlers should address expectations for responsive care routines rather than predetermined schedules (for example, napping when tired and eating when hungry).

6.4 The curriculum framework shall guide teachers in incorporating content, concepts and activities that foster and integrate the **Rhode Island Early Learning and Development Standards and/or Common Core State Standards/Grade Level Expectations** to support all children's learning.

6.5 The curriculum framework shall articulate that **intentional teaching practices**, such as learning through play, the mechanisms through which children attain developmentally appropriate goals in all developmental domains.

In addition, programs that serve infants and toddlers should address expectations that teachers use rich language as an additional key practice

6.6 The curriculum framework shall reflect the program's understanding of **how children learn and develop**, to guide teachers in meeting the individual needs of children.

In addition, programs that serve infants and toddlers should address the role of trusting relationships in fostering learning opportunities.

6.7 The framework shall act as a guide for teachers in **designing and implementing a variety evidence based strategies and multi-level learning opportunities** based on the assessment of the child's developmental levels, learning styles and interests.

In addition, programs that serve infants and toddlers should address consideration of a child's temperament.

**RIDE Comprehensive Early Childhood Education Programs Standards for Approval of
Preschool and Kindergarten Programs****Standards 6.8 – 6.23 / Classroom-Level Curriculum**

Educational leaders creating a curriculum framework should consider how the framework will support teachers as they develop classroom curriculum that meets RIDE CECE Standards 6.8 – 6.23 (adjusted when necessary to meet the developmental needs of infants and toddlers).

CONTEXT – Materials, Learning Environments, Routines & Schedules

RIDE CECE Standards 6.8 – 6.10

- 6.8 Teachers shall design a **learning environment** that is well organized, accessible to all children and equipped with clearly defined learning areas which include, at a minimum, areas devoted to: construction, dramatic play, discovery, books, manipulatives and creative expression.
- 6.9 Teachers shall **organize space and select materials** to stimulate exploration, experimentation, discovery and conceptual learning in all developmental areas. These materials shall be:
- chosen intentionally to support children’s learning goals;
 - well-maintained;
 - organized and labeled;
 - easily accessible to children;
 - representative of the interests, needs and cultures of children;
 - age-appropriate;
 - of sufficient quantity for the numbers of children being served.
- 6.10 Teaching staff shall post, maintain, and follow a regular **daily schedule** which allows flexibility to meet interests and individual needs of the children. The schedule prioritizes play and incorporates:
- a combination of teacher-initiated and child-initiated activities;
 - learning opportunities, experiences, and projects that extend over the course of several days;
 - large group, small group and individual activities;
 - indoor and outdoor activities; and
 - an age appropriate balance between active and quiet activities.
- 6.11 The **outdoor environment** shall be used to promote children’s development and active physical play through intentional curriculum planning.

CONTENT – What Children Know, Understand and Are Able To Do

RIDE CECE Standards 6.11 – 6.12

- 6.12 Teachers shall **intentionally plan and imbed learning opportunities/activities** aligned with the domains of the Rhode Island Early Learning and Development Standards and/or Common Core State Standards/Grade level Expectations to support all children's learning throughout the day.
- 6.13 Teachers shall maintain a **method of documented planning** that demonstrates that curriculum is developed based on the Rhode Island Early Learning and Development Standards and/or Common Core State Standards/Grade level Expectations. Plans should be written at least on a weekly basis with adjustments as needed based on emerging needs, skills and interests of children in the class.

TEACHING & FACILITATING – Teacher's Role, Relationships & Intentional Teaching

RIDE CECE Standards 6.13 – 6.20

- 6.14 Teaching staff shall create a **positive learning environment** by using a wide range of teaching strategies. Teaching strategies shall be:
- based on information gained through ongoing observation and documentation of children's behavior and learning;
 - supportive of children's growth and development in the areas addressed in all domains; and
 - supportive of the development of individual relationships through interactions that are respectful of and sensitive and responsive to differing abilities, temperaments, activity levels, culture and cognitive and social developmental levels.
- 6.15 Teaching staff shall **implement curriculum** in a manner that:
- reflects responsiveness to goals that families have for their children;
 - is informed by child assessment and observation data; and
 - supports the development and maintenance of children's home language whenever possible while promoting English language acquisition; while
 - ensuring that all children have access to universal curriculum, are active participants in classroom activities, and provided accommodations, as needed, to facilitate such participation.
- 6.16 Teaching staff shall **promote children's learning** by responding to their observed and documented need for and interest in practicing emerging skills. Teaching staff shall:
- provide targeted and individualized instruction;
 - utilize multi-level learning opportunities and a variety of instructional strategies to support children's development;

- use children's interest in and curiosity about the world to engage them with new content and developmental skills; and
- provide children opportunities to effect what happens in the classroom through participation in decision making about issues concerning classroom behavior, plans, and activities.

6.17 Teaching staff shall **promote positive interactions** with children by:

- managing behavior, teaching and implementing classroom rules and expectations, and helping individual children learn socially appropriate behavior by providing positive guidance that is consistent with the child's level of development;
- talking frequently with children and listening to children with attention and respect through responding to children's questions and requests, using multiples strategies to communicate and build relationships with every children, and engage in meaningful and extended conversation with each child;
- creating a positive environment through their own behaviors, including frequent social conversations with children, joint laughter and affection, eye contact, tone of voice and smiles;
- developing individual relationships with children by providing care that is responsive, attentive, consistent, comforting, supportive, and culturally sensitive; and
- providing children with opportunities to effect what happens in the classroom through participation in decision making about issues concerning classroom behavior, plans, and activities.

6.18 When a **child presents with challenging behavior**, teaching staff shall:

- a. meet with parents/guardians to share observations, listen to parental/guardian insights, and discuss intentions of how best support the child's appropriate behavior.
- b. Observe the child, then identify events, activities, interactions and other factors that predict and may contribute to challenging behavior.
- c. Focus on teaching the child social communication and emotional regulation skills and using environmental modifications, activity modifications, adult or peer support and other intervention strategies to support the child's appropriate behavior rather than focusing only on eliminating the challenging behavior.
- d. Respond to challenging behavior, including physical aggression, in a manner that provides for the safety of the child and others in the classroom, is calm and respectful to the child and provides the child with information about acceptable behavior

6.19 For all children, staff **shall not use food or outdoor play as a reward or as a behavior consequence**. Exceptions may only be made if specifically stated in a child's Individualized Education Program (IEP).

6.20 **For children requiring special education services**, teaching staff shall collaborate with special education professionals and families to support children with disabilities and developmental delays to succeed in inclusive environments and ensure each partner has access to necessary information and supports for appropriate services.

6.21 When technology is used in a program, **technology shall be used for the purpose of extending learning** within the classroom to integrate and enrich the curriculum. Staff shall be actively engaged in this process with children.

PROCESS – How Children Learn

CECE Standards 6.21 – 6.22

6.22 Teachers shall **implement curriculum through play experiences** that provide multiple opportunities for all children to attain developmentally appropriate goals in each developmental domain.

6.23 Teachers shall **design learning opportunities that integrate multiple goals**

RESOURCES

2013 Comprehensive Early Childhood Education Program Standards for Approval

Rhode Island Department of Education

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/InstructionAssessment/EarlyChildhoodEducation/Programs.aspx>

RIELDS Training – Implementing a Standards Based Program; Developing Standards-Based Curriculum

Rhode Island Department of Education

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/InstructionAssessment/EarlyChildhoodEducation/Workforce.asp>

NAEYC Position statements on Curriculum, Assessment, and Program Evaluation

<https://www.naeyc.org/positionstatements/cape>

Zero to Three - www.zerotothree.org

Caring for Infants and Toddlers in Groups: Developmentally Appropriate Practice, Zero to Three

<http://www.zerotothree.org/early-care-education/child-care>

Center for Early Learning Professionals

<http://center-elp.org/>

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